

January 2, 2008

Dear Science Educators,

The purpose of my letter is twofold: to introduce myself as the State Science and Technology Specialist for the Maine Department of Education and to share information with you about efforts to focus greater attention on science and technology education. In the last several months have begun to meet with the PreK-Diploma educators, school administrators, higher education faculty, informal educators, professional organizations, research organizations and business partners that comprise the Maine science and technology community; I am excited by the energy and wisdom of these individuals in our State. I am confident that, together, we have the knowledge and commitment to improve science and technology education for Maine students.

Collaboration and communication are critical. Working together we can increase understanding of the teaching resources and expertise available throughout the State and raise public awareness of the importance of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (the STEM areas) as preparation for our students for post-secondary education and career opportunities.

The Department of Education is a partner in the work to strengthen science and technology. The following are examples of that work.

- On January 24, 2008 the first Maine STEM Summit will be held at the Augusta Civic Center and Governor Baldacci will launch a STEM Initiative to strengthen learning in the STEM areas. (Informational Letter #32, http://www.maine.gov/tools/whatsnew/index.php?topic=edu_letters&id=44121&v=article)
- A STEM website will be created that will serve as a statewide clearing-house for educator, parent, and student STEM resources.
- A STEM fund will be developed to support business and education collaboration.
- The Maine Department of Education, Maine Science Teachers Association, Technology Education Association of Maine, and Maine Environmental Educators Association have joined together to collect information that will help these organizations better serve Maine

educators. I look forward to receiving a response by February 14, 2008 to the enclosed feedback card (sent electronically to some).

- A Department of Education science and technology web page has been created with direct links to organizations and resources related to science and technology, including links to State and national standards and professional organizations. You can access the web page at <http://www.maine.gov/education/lres/scitech/>

These first steps are important but they are just the first steps. I will look for opportunities to bring external grants to Maine and help teachers in acquiring resources that will provide ongoing professional development to strengthen teacher understanding of PreK-Diploma science and technology content and pedagogy. The research is clear - we improve student achievement when as educators we more fully understand the content we are teaching and utilize instructional approaches that apply the research and the body of knowledge related to student learning.

It has been my belief, in 24 years as a classroom educator, that “we are smarter as a group.” I now bring that belief to my work here at the Department of Education. I am eager to meet you, to hear your dreams and listen to your frustrations, and to help us to work together more effectively, grow smarter, and better serve Maine students.

Sincerely,

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<http://www.maine.gov/education/lres/scitech/>